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Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Letter dated 14 March 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the declaration adopted at the Conference of Women of La Francophonie: Women, Power and Development, held on 4 and 5 February 2000 in Luxembourg (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", under agenda item 2.

(*Signed*) Hubert **Wurth**
Ambassador
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Annex to the letter dated 14 March 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Conference of Women of La Francophonie

"Women, Power and Development"

Final Declaration of Luxembourg

Luxembourg, 5 February 2000

We, the Heads of Delegation of the 55 member States and Governments, associates and observers of countries that use French as a common language, meeting at the invitation of the authorities of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on 4 and 5 February 2000,

adopt this Declaration:

I. Preamble

Welcoming the initiative of the Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie at the twelfth session of the Ministerial Conference at Bucharest on 4 and 5 December 1998,

Recalling the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Eighth Summit of La Francophonie held in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, from 3 to 5 September 1999, which called for a Francophone conference on "Women, Power and Development" in preparation for the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century",

Emphasizing the commitments undertaken at successive meetings within the framework of cooperation among French-speaking countries, and in particular:

- At Nouakchott in July 1994 and at Dakar in November 1994, for the identification of priority issues common to the French-speaking world and appropriate action strategies;
- At Ouagadougou in December 1994, with the resolution adopted by the fourth session of the Ministerial Conference recommending consideration of objectives for a post-Beijing Francophone strategy for women;
- At Cotonou, through resolution No. 11 on follow-up to the Beijing Conference, adopted by the Sixth Francophone Summit in December 1995;

Seeking to take stock of the efforts made since the Beijing Conference (1995) and to identify priorities and concrete action strategies for the future,

Reiterating our intention to work together in the spirit of partnership and cooperation that inspires our member States and Governments, we wish to reaffirm that the commitments made at Beijing during the Fourth World Conference on Women in the 12 priority areas identified remain major objectives for La Francophonie.

II. Strategic objectives

Aware of the importance of relations between women and men for social progress, and wishing to enable persons of both sexes to develop their full potential, we seek to create conditions in which they can become involved in and contribute more effectively to the promotion of equality, de facto and *de jure*, of women and men.

With a view to ensuring that women can share fully and actively in the rights of citizenship, we propose a dual approach, emphasizing:

- Change and evolution in the roles and responsibilities of women and men, which must be accompanied by awareness of the need for a new partnership;
- Systematic respect for the gender approach, i.e., integrating into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies a gender-specific dimension relating to the conditions, priorities, needs and contributions of women and of men.

To highlight the desire of La Francophonie to achieve this objective, we have agreed, on the basis of progress to date, to focus our efforts on two areas, "Power" and "Development", which were identified by the Eighth Summit as being of particular importance to the Francophone community.

We recommend that those efforts should focus on the following aspects:

1. *"Power"*

(a) To achieve full and equal participation by women in political, economic, social and cultural life, measures must be taken to ensure:

- Legal equality, the safeguarding of women's fundamental rights and the elimination of violence of all kinds against women and children, including trafficking in human beings;
- Adoption of the necessary provisions in the areas of education, information and legislation to promote equal access for women and men to electoral office and duties, and to promote participation by women in advisory, judicial, executive and administrative bodies;
- Equality of opportunity for women and men to participate voluntarily, actively and responsibly in political parties and movements;
- The creation or strengthening of institutional mechanisms to oversee the implementation of policies relating to equality of women and men;

(b) With a view to promoting women's access to decision-making, we support in particular:

- Mobilizing efforts of management and labour organizations to promote access and balanced representation for women and men in positions of managerial and decision-making responsibility within those organizations and in the context of collective bargaining;
- Incentives for increasing women's representation in public and private enterprises, at all managerial and professional levels, where decisions are still taken for the most part by men;

- Initiatives and actions by associations, particularly women's associations, to promote equality and balanced participation by women and men at decision-making levels both within those organizations themselves and in society as a whole.

2. *"Development"*

The quest for sustainable development must be pursued in many areas to ensure that women, especially rural women, can participate fully in economic life on an equal footing with men, and to wage an effective battle against poverty in general, and the poverty that afflicts women in particular. These areas relate to the following priority fields of action:

(a) Education and training

We call for:

- The introduction of a methodological approach in educational institutions that will, while recognizing the differences in the social integration of women and men, promote equality between them, i.e., a gender-based approach to teaching;
- The integration of the gender approach into training curricula for teachers and vocational guidance counsellors, as well as for social workers;
- Equal access for girls and boys to schooling, to vocational training, to continuing education and to higher education, especially in the areas of science and technology and research;
- Efforts to keep girls in education and training systems;
- The strengthening of literacy programmes for women;
- The introduction in training programmes aimed at girls and women, particularly in rural areas, of modules designed to help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed for starting and running small businesses;
- Recognition of the growing importance of new information technologies and the media in combating sexist stereotypes and violence.

(b) Health

We recommend programmes for:

- Promoting prevention and awareness of the need to safeguard the physical and psychological integrity of women in terms of health, particularly reproductive health, through campaigns of information and family-life education;
- Generating awareness and fostering education in responsible environmental management;
- Combating sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV-AIDS, with a particular focus on women and young people;
- Combating malaria;
- Combating harmful traditional practices, particularly female genital mutilation.

(c) The economy

We call for:

- Guaranteed equality for women and men in the control and management of economic resources, wealth and property, particularly real property, so that they can participate in economic activity from a sustainable development perspective;
- Guaranteeing the principle of equality of women and men in employment, recruitment and remuneration;
- Organizing the workday so as to balance the demands of vocational and family life;
- Specific measures to combat unemployment among women and to provide social protection for vulnerable women;
- The preparation and implementation of policies and programmes designed to promote equal access for women to finance, trade and new technologies;
- Support for women in the informal sector, through such mechanisms as micro-credit and micro-insurance;
- Support for the establishment of enterprises and cooperatives through enhanced access by women to banking and financial services;
- Official statistics that reflect unpaid work, particularly work performed by women.

(d) Peace

Inasmuch as peace is an indispensable factor for development, we recommend:

- Involving women in mechanisms for preventing, managing and settling conflicts, and strengthening their role in peacekeeping operations;
- Promoting awareness of the causes of violence leading to mass upheavals, in particular movements of refugees and displaced persons, primarily women and children;
- Building confidence, controlling military expenditure, with due regard to international obligations, and transforming post-conflict societies, with involvement of women in all these efforts and equality of women and men as a standing objective;
- Including education in citizenship, peace and human rights and freedoms in school curricula for girls and boys.

III. Strategic measures

To highlight the Francophone commitment to action, we have agreed to promote new undertakings and to institute a framework for exchanging experience, information and best practice.

We therefore invite the International Organization of La Francophonie, and particularly its Intergovernmental Agency and direct operators, as well as all member States and Governments, to increase their efforts and to commit the necessary human and financial resources in the areas of, first, women's involvement

in the decision-making process and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, and, second, participation by women in development with a view to improving their socio-economic situation within a sustainable development perspective.

To these ends, we hereby:

1. Invite member States and Governments to mobilize the resources necessary to achieve the above objectives relating to power and development, through:

- Implementing or reinforcing, as appropriate, a national coordination mechanism for defining, executing, monitoring and evaluating policies for promoting equality of women and men;
- Designing and implementing, in countries that have not done so already, a national strategy to promote equality of women and men;
- Using resources from debt relief and debt service conversion in projects and programmes aimed at promoting equality of women and men in all areas;
- The development of cooperation programmes to promote equality of women and men through the exchange of positive experiences, North/South, South/North and South/South;
- Bringing national legislation and regulations into conformity with ratified international instruments.

2. Invite the Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF), through the Intergovernmental Agency of La Francophonie, to commit the institution firmly to:

- Fostering equality of women and men in all political activities;
- A forward-looking examination of the place of women in the parliaments of countries that use French as a common language;
- Integrating women into the decision-making process on actions to promote peace and democracy and in the area of conflict prevention and settlement;
- Promoting women into advisory, decision-making and managerial positions at all levels within OIF;
- Making all member States aware of the importance of signing, ratifying, publicizing and giving effective application to all relevant international legal instruments, particularly the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Encouraging all member States to give constant attention to implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to examine the possibility of removing any reservations entered at the time of ratification;
- Taking steps to give effective force to the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Implementing a dynamic policy of cooperation with other international or regional organizations and with international non-governmental organizations

involved with women's issues and development cooperation, in the context of La Francophonie;

- Maintaining the closest possible coordination between member States and governments of countries that use French as a common language to ensure respect and implementation of these objectives.

3. We request the Intergovernmental Agency of La Francophonie and the direct operators of the Summit, in accordance with their respective areas of competence, to take these priority lines of action into account in implementing their programmes, drawing upon the experience of member States and Governments in order to ensure that multilateral cooperation among countries that use French as a common language contributes effectively to:

- The establishment of a cross-cutting mechanism for the design, implementation, coordination and evaluation of measures to promote awareness, information and education about the principle of equality of women and men;

- Support for research, particularly in the sciences, with a view to fostering recognition of the work of women scientists and engineers and identifying the various factors that impede women's access to scientific and technological pursuits;

- The establishment and promotion of a permanent network of French-speaking experts, male and female, including representatives of national and international non-governmental organizations, and regular publication of information on the status of gender equality in the member countries and institutions of La Francophonie;

- The establishment of a gender-specific database and a rationale relating to policies aimed at promoting equality, eliminating discrimination and combating poverty;

- Establishing a database on French-speaking women who hold or have held decision-making positions;

- Developing and applying a common French terminology in areas relating to gender equality and women's rights.

Finally, we urge the Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie, through the Intergovernmental Agency of La Francophonie and in cooperation with the direct operators and with the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie, to oversee implementation of all the recommendations in this Declaration, in the context of the joint efforts that member countries will be making during the preparatory meeting for the New York Conference in March 2000 and again in June 2000 during the Conference on "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

The various bodies of La Francophonie will be kept informed of progress in implementing this Declaration.